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TUCSON MAN CONVICTED OF 73 FELONY COUNTS RELATED TO CHINESE STEROID DISTRIBUTION

Even while in custody, he used his mother in Nebraska to continue the illegal transactions

TUCSON, Ariz. - Aaron Habben, 30, of Tucson, Ariz., (and formerly of Lincoln, Neb.), was found guilty here by a federal jury of 73 felony counts including Conspiracy to Distribute Anabolic Steroids, Possession of Anabolic Steroids with Intent to Distribute, Possession of False Identification Cards with Intent to Defraud, Bribery, Money Laundering and Conspiracy to Money Launder. Habben is currently in federal custody and awaits sentencing scheduled before U.S. District Court Judge Cindy K. Jorgenson on December 14, 2005. The case was tried before Judge Jorgenson from September 19-29, 2005.

The evidence at trial showed that in February 2002, U.S. Customs officials intercepted packages, filled with anabolic steroids shipped from China, that were addressed to personal mail boxes at Pack 'N Ship and Aim Mail Center in Tucson, Ariz. Agents from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) conducted surveillance operations and identified the defendant and his place of residence. During the execution of a search warrant of Habben's house, agents found thousands of pills of anabolic steroids and gallons of liquid anabolic steroids, along with 15 false identification cards (including fake driver's licenses from Nebraska and fake Social Security cards), overseas bank account receipts from prior payments of steroids shipments and three computers that contained the terms of the steroid sales conducted over the internet.

Agents also found \$64,000 in cash hidden in a hollowed out book in Habben's bedroom dresser. When Habben was informed that the money had been found, he offered the agents, who refused, an opportunity to take the money as long as they left him and did not arrest him.

After being placed in custody, Habben continued his sale of steroids by enlisting his mother and an ex-girlfriend in Nebraska to conduct the transactions. From jail and through his mother, Habben began moving the proceeds from his illicit drug sales into stock options and trading houses. Agents secured search warrants in Nebraska and Georgia and seized more steroids and over \$87,000 in cash that the defendant's mother was hiding. In all, five defendants were charged with 78 counts.

A conviction for Conspiracy to Distribute Anabolic Steroids, Possession with Intent to Distribute Anabolic Steroids and Conspiracy to Money Launder each carries a maximum penalty of five years in prison, a \$ 250,000 fine or both. A conviction for Bribery carries a maximum penalty

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of 15 years in prison, a \$192,000 fine or both. A conviction for Possession of False Identification Cards with Intent to Defraud carries a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison, a \$250,000 fine or both. A conviction for Money Laundering carries a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison, a \$644,000 fine or both. In determining an actual sentence, Judge Jorgenson will consult the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges. The judge, however, is not bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence.

The investigation leading to the guilty verdicts was conducted by FDA and DEA. U.S. Postal Inspection Service and U.S. Customs were also involved in the investigation of this case. The prosecution was handled by Serra M. Tsethlikai and D. Thomas Ferraro, Assistant U.S. Attorneys, District of Arizona, Tucson, Ariz.

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